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GRAHAM

GRANADA: A PRIZE POEM

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A PRIZE POEM,

RECITED IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD,

JUNE 19,

MDCCCXXXIII.

BY

JOHN GRAHAM,

WADHAM COLLEGE.

OXFORD,

PUBLISHED BY J. VINCENT.

MDCCCXXXIII.

It is a story, Monsieur Le Notaire, said the gentleman, which will rouse up every affection in nature: it will kill the humane, and touch the heart of Cruelty herself with pity.—The notary was inflamed with a desire to begin, and put his pen a third time into his inkhorn; and the old gentleman, turning a little more towards the notary, began to dictate his story in these words——

STERNE.

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GRANADA.

THRON'D in thy beauty on the mountain's breast,
Fair as the fabled mansions of the blest,
Bright as that fount^a, the Arab's desert star,
Whose gem-like waters sparkle from afar,
Art thou, Granada! Man may ruin still,
Himself, the weak creations of his will;
Pour forth the vessels of his puny wrath,
And heap the wreck of empires on his path;
But Nature's beauty knows not of decay,
Fears not the spoiler, recks not of the fray:
And such is thine. Unhush'd, the mountain gale
Drinks in the dewy freshness of the vale;

^a The diamond of the desert, described by Sir Walter Scott in the Talisman.

And still the streamlet, on its homeward flight,
Bares its unshrinking bosom to the light ;
Rob'd in the icy mantle of the sky,
The far Sierra lifts its front on high ;
And gaily springing from the bloodless sod,
The wild flow'r blossoms where the warrior trod.

Yet not alone to vale or mountain stream
Hath Beauty lent her consecrating beam :
Lo ! where the city lifts, as if in scorn,
Her airy turrets to the op'ning morn.
What though the victor's wrath, the bigot's zeal,
Have marr'd the grandeur they could never feel ;
While cold neglect, that waiteth upon man,
Urg'd on the wreck that Tyranny began ?
They could not tear the wreath that time has cast,
Or still the voice that speaketh of the past ;
Though lost the crescent, Beauty lingers yet
On swelling dome and sparkling minaret :
She haunts the mosque, though no Muezzin there
Calls the grave Moslem to his wonted pray'r ;

And hangs the symbol of her deathless pow'r
From the gray summit of the moss-grown tow'r.
Yet hence, perchance, the warder's startled eye
Dwelt on the Goth's advancing chivalry :
He saw each banner'd squadron proudly sweep
Through the deep glen and round th' untrodden steep ;
And curs'd the hated Giaour, whose Christian hand
Had loos'd War's hell-hounds o'er his father-land.

Yes ! War hath left its dismal record here,
Traced in the victim's blood, the mourner's tear ;
Stamp'd in fierce meaning on the batter'd wall,
Writ in the silence of the ruin'd hall.
Here from the lip of myriads burst on high
The Christian shout, the Moslem battle-cry :
Each deep-embosom'd vale, and giant rock,
Gave forth its voice in answer to the shock.

Charge for the crescent, Islam !—boldly here
Spur the wild steed, and grasp the gory spear !
Lift high the blade, and shake the loosen'd rein,
And nerve each arm, that ne'er may strike again !

On for the cross ! their fainting squadrons reel :
Forward for Spain, ye warriors of Castile !
Saints smile approving o'er each knightly deed—
Glory for all—but heav'n for those who bleed !

Such was the echoing shout that madly rose
Through Andalusia's valleys of repose.
Swift as the rous'd simoom's unearthly blast
The war-tide rush'd, and wasted as it pass'd.
And well thy gallant sons, Morisma ! gave
Their breasts to stem its desolating wave :
Theirs was the frantic hate, the undying will,
That thirsted less to conquer—than to kill ;
The fell revenge, that ask'd no second strife,
The scorn that fled not with the fleeting life.
Yet all were vain !—What boots it now to tell
How the Goth triumph'd, and the Moslem fell ?

Mourn in thy widowhood, Morisma ! mourn
Thy sceptre wrested, and thy banner torn ;
Queen of the west ! the unbeliever now
Hath rent the crown of Beauty from thy brow :

The stranger lords it o'er thy prostrate line,
The Christian worships at thy conquer'd shrine :
Thy warrior sons are slain in nameless strife,
Or live—to curse the bitterness of life.
Scorn'd, like the Jew of old, they cross the wave,
To seek the stranger's heritage—a grave ;
And oft, perchance, on Afric's desert wide,
Whose pillar'd sands upon the whirlwind ride ;
Where no glad fountain greets the frensied eye,
And nought is left the wand'rer—but to die ;
Shall Mem'ry, strong in death, awake to tell
Of that far region which he lov'd so well.
Again, oh once again, his cheek is fann'd
By the soft breezes of his native land :
Again he seems with joyful step to rove
Through flow'ry mead and fountain-water'd grove ;
And marks from barren rock or swelling hill
The silver windings of the smooth Xenil :—

Rais'd like the eagle's mountain-nest on high,
Each lordly turret flashing to the sky,

Hallow'd by minstrel's lyre and warrior's lance,
Th' Alhambra rears its palace of romance.
On through the spell-bound portal, ere thy tread
Wake from their dreamless sleep the kingly dead :
Ere yet thy view some fierce enchanter blast,
Gaze on the beauteous chambers of the past :
For here, 'tis said, at midnight's spectral hour,
Boabdil leads again his vanquish'd pow'r ;
With meteor pennon streaming to the gale,
His warriors march beneath the moonbeam pale :
From haunted rock and fairy cavern freed,
Flashes the sword, and starts the foaming steed ;
Bright waves the plume o'er many a crest of gold,
On high the banner spreads its silken fold ;
But yet no sound is there—no footsteps fall,
To wake the echoes of that peopled hall :
From each unstirring lip no gather'd breath
Breaks forth to mar the mockery of death.

Oh yes, if mem'ry lives beyond the tomb,
Unquench'd, unconscious of the body's doom ;

If from the darkling vault and narrow urn
To each lov'd haunt the spirit may return ;
Here would thy soul, Boabdil, linger yet,
Still forc'd to love, still pow'rless to forget ;
For ne'er did painter's skill, or poet's dream,
Fancy's wrapt gaze, or Hope's prophetic gleam—
Not that bold seer^b who view'd with mortal eye
His saints' eternal mansions in the sky—
Shape out more beauty for heav'n's distant sphere,
Than man hath rais'd in earthly triumph here.

Its courts are silent now—the wise, the brave,
The sceptred despot, and the kneeling slave ;
The beauteous forms, that like a vision stray'd,
Haunting the lone Zenanah's blissful shade ;
All—all are gone for ever : cold and mute
Sleeps the glad music of Zorayda's lute.
Hush'd is each fount that warbled as it fell,
Like prison'd syren whisp'ring o'er her spell,
And bright no more, the shaken blossoms fling
Their wonted fragrance o'er the zephyr's wing.

^b Mahomet.

Lo ! Heav'n's avenger ! on his destin'd way
Rushes the Goth to scatter and to slay—
And none may wait his coming—all are fled,
Save the weak dying, and the ghastly dead.

The sun had set, but still his ling'ring beam
Dwelt in the cloud, and danced upon the stream :
Slept in calm beauty on the mountain's brow,
And touch'd with checquer'd light the forest bough.
The sun had set—no breeze was heard to sigh
Through the deep azure of the tranquil sky :
No wayward ripple crisp'd the silent rill,
But Nature smil'd in gladness—and was still.

Earth bath its calm—the tempests have their sleep,
But man must wake, that fellow men may weep.
Charter'd through life to torture or to bear,
He only knows no respite from despair.
Hark to that cry, whose feebly-echoed wail
Swells on the death-like stillness of the vale :
Reft of his friends, unnotic'd by the foe,
Boabdil wends his pilgrimage of woe.

With no unmanly tear, without a groan,
The warrior prince had left his fallen throne :
He could not wait the victor's courteous wile,
Or bend to woo compassion's tardy smile :
He could not see the proud invader roam
Through the lov'd chambers of his palace home.
No stranger's eye should view, no tongue should tell,
The piercing anguish of that wild farewell
Which nature crav'd, as now he stood to cast
One burning look, the longest, and the last.

Fair was the scene ! eve's thousand hues of light
Bath'd the wide Vega's garden of delight :
Its green bank curtain'd by the blushing rose,
The winding streamlet wander'd to repose :
Through groves of balm the waken'd zephyr play'd,
And aye some fountain sparkled from their shade ;
While far beyond, the lov'd Alhambra lay,
Shrin'd in the dying lustre of the day.

Is it the damp of eve, whose misty veil
Hangs like a wreath upon the viewless gale ?

Is it some meteor beam, or heav'n-lit star,
Whose fiery radiance flashes from afar?
Hence—'tis the volleying peal—that roars to tell
The scornful triumph of the infidel.
He heard—till now, despair had never wrung
Tear from his eye, or murmur from his tongue;
But now it might not be—the pow'rless mind
Bent like a reed beneath the rushing wind:
In vain the quiv'ring lip would falter still
One Stoic word, that mocks the speaker's will.
“Allah Akbar!”^c away!—that gushing tear
Speaks from the heart—What doth the exile here?

Loud is the wail through yon despairing town,
And chang'd the scene beneath a tyrant's frown:

^c While he yet looked, a light cloud of smoke burst forth from the citadel; and presently a peal of artillery, faintly heard, told that the city was taken possession of, and that the throne of the Moslem kings was lost for ever. The heart of Boabdil, softened by misfortunes, and overcharged with grief, could no longer contain itself: “Allah Akbar!” God is great! said he; but the words of resignation died upon his lips, and he burst into a flood of tears.—*Irving's Conquest of Granada.*

Sunk is the daring glance, whose vengeful glow
Once lower'd in fierceness on the coming foe ;
Crush'd the proud soul, and chain'd the patriot hand,
Which pois'd the spear, or sway'd the battle-brand ;
And o'er the conquer'd mosque's converted dome
The worshipp'd cross hath found its changeless home ;
While far beneath, the waning crescent lies,
A rayless outcast from its native skies.
In the deserted dwelling of the strong
The peaceful hermit chaunts his matin song ;
And where the Haram frown'd, the Convent rears
Its house of mourning, and its home of tears.

Oh woman ! not for thee the living tomb,
The Haram's splendour, or the convent's gloom :
Not thine to bend at fear's unhallow'd nod,
And scorn the world, to please creation's God :
To see, to feel, that earth, that life is fair,
Yet weep to think thou hast no portion there !
No, child of joy ! a holier task is thine,
A brighter prospect, and a purer shrine.

'Tis thine to curb the passions' madd'ning sway,
And wipe the mourner's bitter tear away :
'Tis thine to soothe, when hope itself has fled,
And cheer with angel smile the suff'rer's bed :
To give to earth its charm, to life its zest,
One only task—to bless, and to be blest.

Weep, Islam ! weep, thy Koran's sainted page
Hath felt the bigot Goth's fanatic rage.
And came he then with pitying hand to bring
A holier worship from a purer spring ?
Came he with lowly step, and soothing voice,
To aid the humble, bid the weak rejoice ?
To bid the haughty spirit's strength be bow'd,
Raise up the feeble, and abash the proud ?
Oh no ! in earthly guise the teacher came,
With robe of crimson, and with scourge of flame !
His the tremendous creed which sought to tear
Faith from defiance, worship from despair.
And his th' infuriate pride, which lov'd to strain
Belief from writhing lip and throbbing brain.

Stern Persecution stood, with iron smile,
To ply the rack, or light the ready pile :
And as she watch'd her tortur'd victim bleed,
Held mercy's cross to consecrate the deed !

And is it thus, dread Father ? can it be,
That man should frame an off'ring meet for thee ?
Is thine ear gladden'd by thy creature's cry ?
Is murder foul no more to Mercy's eye ?
And was it thus the Shepherd brought of old
His wand'ring flock to their deserted fold ?
Not such *thy* coming when the promis'd light
Shall scare with seraph wing the fleeting night :
When through the waken'd earth thy cross shall win
Its bloodless triumph o'er defeated sin.
Then—at the fulness of appointed time—
Earth's every race shall flock from every clime.
E'en now they come—through each resounding shore
A voice hath told that sin shall be no more.
From the far regions of the frozen north
The fur-clad chieftain leads his myriads forth :

And by the dark Savannah's lonely side
The warrior Indian vails his Stoic pride.
Lo ! Hagar's offspring, doom'd no more to roam,
List the glad sound, and leave their desert home ;
And rous'd from Ganges' God-deserted stream,
The Brahmin turns to hail a holier beam.
Forc'd by no torture, aw'd not by the sword,
The Moslem leaves for aye his prophet lord ;
And see, repentant Israel bows her down
To Him, who wore of old her martyr crown.
Till, from one mighty tongue, the mingled pray'r
Swells in glad homage through the silent air ;
And nations join in one adoring cry,
The earth their altar, and their shrine the sky.



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